

VZCZCXRO9237
OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #2302 2120959
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 300959Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3858
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 8924
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0947
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 6209
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1712
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 5513
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 002302

SIPDIS

NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/30/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: MOTHERLAND PARTY LEADER ANNOUNCES WITHDRAWAL FROM
GOVERNING COALITION

REF: BANGKOK 2243 (PREDICTION OF UNITY GOVERNMENT)

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James F. Entwistle, reason: 1.4
(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Deputy Prime Minister Suwit Khunkitti publicly announced on July 29 the withdrawal of his Motherland Party from the governing coalition. He appears to have acted without the full authority of the party, however. A reliable contact told us Suwit was bitter about his imminent loss of his cabinet seat in the upcoming reshuffle. Even if the Motherland Party defects in toto, Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej's People's Power Party (PPP) has sufficient allies to command majority support in the House. A Democrat Party official told us his party was not in talks about including Democrats in the reshuffled cabinet; the Democrats would only join a "government of national unity" if instructed to do so by the King. End Summary.

12. (U) Motherland Party Leader and Deputy Prime Minister Suwit Khunkitti held a press conference on July 29 to announce that his party was withdrawing from the governing coalition. Suwit cited the government's declared desire to amend the constitution and the recent controversy over the Preah Vihear temple as reasons for this move.

13. (C) We discussed Suwit's statement on July 30 with Ekkaphap Polsue, a former Thai Rak Thai legislator informally associated with the Motherland Party. Ekkaphap told us the Motherland Party's executive board had made no formal decision to withdraw from the governing coalition, and, although Suwit claimed to have spoken on behalf of the party, he appeared to lack the capacity to do so. Ekkaphap claimed Suwit's statement stemmed from his disappointment after learning that he would lose his cabinet seat in the upcoming reshuffle.

14. (C) We spoke on July 30 with staff members from the offices of the four Motherland Party cabinet members. Staff members claimed that Deputy Interior Minister Sitthichai Kowsurat (on an official trip abroad) and Information and Communication Technology Minister Man Patthanothai (presiding over a ceremonial event outside of the Ministry) were still performing their official duties. Neither Suwit nor Deputy Finance Minister Ranongrak Suwannachawee reported to their offices on the morning of July 30, but it was unclear whether they had formally submitted their resignations.

¶5. (C) Isra Sunthornvut, Secretary to Democrat Party Leader Abhisit Vejjajiva, told us in a July 30 conversation that the Democrat Party had not engaged in discussions with the People's Power Party (PPP) about the possible inclusion of Democrats in a Samak-led cabinet. Isra told us there were currently no plans for the Democrats to join a "government of national unity" (hypothesized in reftel), and it was difficult for him to imagine the formation of such a cabinet.

Isra assured us that politicians would not come to such an arrangement by themselves, although, if instructed to do so by the palace, they would obey.

¶6. (C) Comment: We do not take at face value Suwit's claim that he and fellow party members are breaking from the government over policy differences; we believe the upcoming cabinet shuffle's impact on personal interests offers a more likely explanation. The Motherland Party holds 24 seats in the 480-seat parliament, and, even if it were to defect in toto, this move by itself would not significantly impede PPP's ability to form a government.

JOHN